

PROMOTING HEALTHY MARRIAGE

The Republican Bill Provides Reasonable Approaches to Promote Healthy Marriages

Historically, the welfare system had a bias against marriage.

- While the AFDC program was created to support widowed and deserted mothers, its restrictive rules made it virtually impossible for women to get married and still receive assistance.
- Perversely, the program seemed to entice women to have children outside marriage. The out-of-wedlock birthrate soared from 7.7 percent in 1965 when the program was created to 33 percent today. Now 60% of adult TANF recipients have never been married, and most had their first child as a teenager.

Research is clear that children do best when raised by 2 married parents.

- Children raised by single parents are 5 times more likely to live in poverty, 5 times more likely to depend on welfare, 2-3 times more likely to show behavioral problems, and twice as likely to commit crimes or go to jail. Conservatives and liberals agree on this point.
- Children raised by single parents also are more likely to suffer from abuse and neglect, commit suicide, take drugs, and drop out of school.

The President's plan and the Republican bill do not mandate marriage. They dedicate a small amount of resources to test strategies that might reverse the devastating trend of out-of-wedlock births.

- It is estimated that 40% of mothers who have children out-of-wedlock are living with the father of their child at the time of the child's birth. Of these moms, more than half think they have a good or certain chance of marrying the child's father.
- It is reasonable to think that some type of assistance at this "magic moment" could have important benefits to children.
- The President's plan and the Republican bill would direct some current welfare funds to allow States to test various approaches to assistance, promote education and marital preparation programs that can help couples decide if marriage is the right course, offer courses in high school about the benefits of marriage and relationship skills, and provide counseling to strengthen healthy marriages.
- In total, as much as \$300 million could be available for these purposes – a modest amount of funds that will not detract from the \$17 billion in TANF and \$5 billion in child care available each year.